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| <p>Montana Department of Public Health & Human Services</p> <p>CHILD CARE</p> | <p>Section:</p> <p>Overview - Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarships</p> <hr/> <p>Subject:</p> <p>Parent Eligibility - Overview</p> |
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Supersedes: Child Care 1-9 (7/01/03)

References: Sections 52-2-701-704, 52-2-711-713, 53-4-610 MCA;
Sections 37.80.101-103, 37.80.201-202, 37.80.205-206, 37.80.301-302,
37.80.305 -306, 37.80.315-316, 37.80.501 ARM
45 CFR Part 98

General Rule The child, the parents, and the child care provider must qualify to participate in the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship program. Eligible parents must:

- ☐ Earn less than 150% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines for their family size;
- ☐ Need child care in order to work or work and attend school or participate in FIA/EP activities;
- ☐ Cooperate with child support enforcement or have in place a court approved parenting plan, if an absent parent exists.

The need for child care must meet minimum work and participation requirements based on family size, composition, and circumstance.

US Citizenship US Citizenship is not required by the parent.

Montana Residency Refer to Child Eligibility in Section 1-6 for Montana residency requirements for the child and the parent, who must be living together in Montana.

Parent – Overview of Eligibility Categories The Montana Department of Public Services (DPHHS) Early Childhood Services Bureau provides Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarships for parents participating in the following programs:

1. Families who work and have a low income, but earn less than 150% of the federal poverty guidelines (Non-TANF).
2. Families who receive TANF Cash Assistance and are participating in

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Family Investment Agreement/Employability Plan Activities requiring child care.

3. Eligible tribal families, if they are not being served by their Tribal CCDF program.
4. Families participating in a Tribal TANF program, if their Tribal CCDF program is not serving them.
5. CPS families in need of child care because the children are in danger of abuse or neglect.

**Non-TANF
Parent
Overview–
See Section 2 for
Details**

Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarships for low-income families whose income falls below 150% of the federal poverty guidelines:

- ❑ Low-income working families must meet one of the following minimum hourly work requirements each month:
 - 120 hours per month for two-parent families; or
 - 60 hours per month single parent families; or
 - 40 hours per month for single parent families, while the parent attends education/training full time.

Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarships are provided for employment time and out-of-home classroom time, when attending school or training.

Note: Disabled parents who are not able to care for their children are not included when determining the minimum hourly work requirement for the family.

- ❑ Disabled parents who work, but are not able to meet the minimum hourly work requirement each month, may be eligible for a Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship only during employment time.
- ❑ Low-income teen parents (through age 19) attending high school, GED or an equivalency program do not have a minimum work requirement.
 - A child care scholarship is provided for out-of-home classroom time and employment hours.

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TANF Cash Assistance

Parents

Overview –

See Section 3-1 for Details

The local County Offices of Public Assistance determine eligibility for families seeking Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF):

- ❑ Parent receiving TANF Cash assistance may receive a Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship for employment and Family Investment Agreement (FIA)/Employability Plan (EP) activities, which require child care. Parents negotiate FIA/EP activities with their OPA or WoRC Case Manager. Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarships are determined according to the family's need for child care while participating in the Family Investment Agreement/Employability Plan.

Tribal TANF Parents

See Section 3-2 for Details

Montana's Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) State Plan supports all TANF parents in the State. Both Tribal and Montana TANF families are guaranteed child care in support of Family Investment Activities (FIA)/Employability Plan (EP) activities. Currently, the Confederated Salish & Kootenai tribes of the Flathead Nation, the Fort Belknap Indian Community, and the Rocky Boy Indian Community are operating their own Tribal TANF program in Montana. Tribal TANF families who:

- ❑ find they are not eligible for Tribal CCDF benefits, or
- ❑ find their Tribal CCDF has been used, may apply for Montana CCDF Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarships through their district Child Care Resource and Referral agency.

A parent must provide written verification their Tribal CCDF is not able to serve their family, before a State CCDF Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship will be approved.

CPS Child Care Eligibility

Overview -

See Section 4 for Details

DPHHS Child and Family Services Division (CFSD) social workers identify families in need of child care for protective services. Social workers evaluate the risk of child abuse and neglect in determining a family's eligibility for Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarships:

- ❑ A CFSD Social Worker determines eligibility.
- ❑ The child care provider may be selected by the Social Worker.
- ❑ There is no income eligibility requirement for families.

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- ❑ There is no co-payment obligation for parents.

The Non-TANF CPS child care budget is limited. If a family is temporarily eligible for TANF benefits or eligible for Non-TANF child care, CPS child care needs may be served under either one of these Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship options.

**Food Stamps
Employment &
Training**

For parents participating in the Food Stamp Employment & Training (FSET) job-seeking activities are not covered under the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship program. The parent's FSET Case Manager may be able to help parents with child care expenses.



Food Stamp Employment & Training requires:

- ❑ Parent is receiving Food Stamps,
- ❑ Parent cannot be receiving TANF, and
- ❑ Parent must reside in Lewis & Clark, Missoula, Silverbow or Yellowstone county.

**Other Child
Care Options**

Parents may contact their local Child Care Resource and Referral agency to explore other child care subsidy options within their community (i.e. Employer sponsored flex spending, local community funds, supportive services).